



Northern Iraq

Sniper school hits target in Iraq

Story and photo by

Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

4th Infantry Division

MOSUL — For the first time since 1968, a sniper school is being held on foreign soil during combat.

The National Guard Marksmanship Training Center sent the cadre of its sniper course to northern Iraq to train the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in skills that have proved to be useful during combat operations.

The need for sniper training was discussed by soldiers from the division's three infantry brigades. The request for the course went up the division chain of command until it was put to the soldiers who work at the training center.

"All this stuff starts off as a great idea by a PFC or a specialist, then makes its way up the ranks," said Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin L. Hill, division command sergeant major. "The 101st ran jump school in England, so why not the Air Assault school in Iraq? Why not the sniper school?"

The sniper course normally runs at Camp Robinson, North Little Rock, Ark. The version being run in Iraq has been changed to suit the environment, said Sgt. 1st Class Bret Boatright, noncommissioned officer in charge, sniper course.



A student at the National Guard Marksmanship Training Sniper Course takes aim at a target 700 meters away with his M-24 Sniper Weapon System. The course is taking place in the open prairies of northern Iraq for the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

"According to (Training and Doctrine) we can adjust the (program of instruction) 20 percent, so we have a little play there," Boatright said.

Instead of the usual five-week

course, the course has been compressed to three weeks. To do this the instructors had to cut out days off and add hours of teaching time to the remaining workdays. In the end the

soldiers spend the same number of hours learning sniper skills as students do in the original course.

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1st Lt. Mikal Shabazz, a soldier with the 304th Civil Affairs Battalion, teaches soldiers basic Arabic in a class held Nov. 8th. The class is open for all soldiers at Champion Base in Ar Ramadi.

Class teaches Arabic culture, language

Story and photo by

Sgt. Joe Healy

82nd Airborne

AR RAMADI — "Repeat after me," said 1st Lt. Mikal Shabazz, a reservist with the 304th Civil Affairs Brigade. "As-saleem alaikam. Again, as-saleem alaikam. One more time, but speak a little slower and enunciate; As-saleem alaikam. Good."

The Arabic phrase translated in English literally means: May (God's) peace be upon you, according to Shabazz. The soldiers repeating Shabazz's words are learning Arabic

in one of the nightly classes he teaches. Located at the Division Chapel, the course is open to all soldiers at Champion Base.

In a small, simple room, Arabic words and phrases are scratched in thick blue marker ink on over-sized poster paper. Five soldiers studied the script and imitated their teacher during the evening class held Nov. 8. The class met for the 11th session.

"The course work challenges your mind," said Sgt. Shaikh Ali, a soldier with the 313th Military Intelligence Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division.

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Turkey Day meal makes soldiers gobble

By Sgt. Gabe Nix

350th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

AR RAMADI — A turkey gobbles in the fields of Ellettsville, Indiana, an area known for its contribution to the Thanksgiving holiday. A turkey translator interprets the gobble. "I wish to be part of the "All-American" Thanksgiving this year in Iraq." Excitement for this year's Thanksgiving feast is not limited to the turkeys in the field.

"This year's All-American Thanksgiving will be a festive atmosphere," says food service supervisor Master Sgt. Mack E. Sumler, "as well as a tribute to the 82nd Airborne and all of the soldiers who are serving here."

The festive soiree features a Thanksgiving lineup that promises to bring the most disciplined paratrooper all the way back for seconds. Included in the feast are thanksgiving staples such as turkey, ham, stuffing, glazed sweet potatoes, shrimp cocktail, and an assortment of deserts and drinks.

Kellogg, Brown and Root food service technician, Melvin Young is making the necessary preparations required to feed an army. He is planning on going through 4,000 pounds of turkey, 3,000 pounds of shrimp, and 4,000 hams. Young, retired from the U.S. Army, also said KBR is working hand-in-hand with Army food service workers to

make the event an even greater success.

As soon as the supplies arrive, Army cooks will be helping to put the finishing touches on the All American Thanksgiving by putting up decorations, setting up tables, assisting the chefs and using their culinary skills to erect sculptures out of chocolate and ice.

The Thanksgiving Day dinner will be available for all soldiers working in the 82nd Airborne area of operations.

Sumler hopes the extra surprises planned, as well as the extra effort being put forth by the Army cooks, will allow soldiers time to forget about their current situation for a short while.

"You take a moment, five minutes, an hour, a

day, to realize what you are thankful for, make the soldiers feel like they are back home, and be thankful for what they have," said Sumler.

The atmosphere will be augmented by more than the mouthwatering chow. "Everyone will be impressed by what we have done," commented Sumler. "The goal is to take care of the soldiers. A lot of planning has gone into this, and the chain of command has given us all of their support."

Being away from home during the holidays is often part of military life, but

Sumler hopes that this year's All-American Thanksgiving will give everyone a morale boost and give them motivation to finish the deployment strong.

“ This year’s
‘All-American’
Thanksgiving will be a
festive atmosphere. ”

— Master Sgt. Mack E. Sumler
Food service supervisor

Soldiers quench thirst for Internet use at new cafe

Story and photo by

Staff Sgt. David Bennett

367th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

LSA ANACONDA — Soldiers who were starved for connectivity are getting their fill at the new Internet café at Logistics Supply Area Anaconda.

Before 20 new laptops arrived in late October, soldiers at the camp bided their time in long lines waiting to use one computer to check their e-mails or surf the Web, according to Maj. Kevin H. Griffin, communications officer for 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

To solve the problem of long waits a computer package was purchased.

The hardware, which included 20 computers, eight Internet phones, a

256-kilobyte satellite transceiver and server, was ordered in June, but took longer than expected, the major said.

"It seemed like it took forever for the package to get here," said Griffin, who is from Buffalo, N.Y.

Griffin said there are plans to outfit every forward operating base in the Task Force Ironhorse area with a similar computer setup.

Because a permanent building was unavailable, planners of the café chose to construct a building using local help, said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Cantwell, communications noncommissioned officer for the 3rd Brigade.

"We built it from the ground up," said Cantwell, a native of Stony Brook, N.Y. "We hired Iraqi electricians who did the electrical work."

At a nickel per minute, Cantwell



Spc. Lacy J. Fain, a topographic analyst with the 610th Engineer Detachment, checks her email at the new Internet cafe at Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

said users at LSA Anaconda can get nearly nine hours of telephone calls for a \$25 investment, which is considerably less money than they will spend at the nearby telephone center.

With 20 computer stations, there has been little waiting for people wanting to get online. At the café,

which is open around the clock, each user is restricted to 30 minutes.

"This is a lot faster and there are not too many people," said Spc. Lacy J. Fain a topographical analyst from Escanaba, Mich. who is assigned to the 6th Engineer Detachment of Fort Hood, Texas.

Shhh! Remember our enemies are listening.
They want to know what you know.
Keep it to yourself.

Contributions to the newspaper are welcome from servicemembers in northern Iraq. Submit stories to cpiccmdinfo@baghdadforum.com.

Chaplains reinforce the tie that binds

Soldiers reaffirm marriage vows in covenant ceremony

Story and photo by Spc. Joshua M. Risner
40th Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL — Marriage is a sacred institution. For soldiers deployed to faraway lands, the strain that is put on them and their spouses can be extremely difficult to deal with; it can even break a marriage apart.

To strengthen the bond that soldiers share with their spouses, chaplains with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) held a Coin and Covenant ceremony at the Camp Performance chapel.

The program was originally developed by Army chaplains in Korea for soldiers whose duty separated them from their families for long periods of time, according to Chap. (Capt.) Fran E. Stuart, 526th Forward Support Battalion. "It's a historic moment for us... it's the first time this program has been implemented in Iraq," she said.

Approximately 40 soldiers were present for the ceremony, which detailed the courage, challenge and commitment necessary to make it through the hard times of separation. The soldiers had been married anywhere from one year to nearly 20. "The program encompasses anybody who is married and in this situation," Stuart said. "It's a wonderful program to strengthen marriages."

First, certificates and coins were presented stating the commitment to their wives/husbands and signed by the soldiers and the chaplains giving the ceremony. The certificates were gathered up at the end of the ceremony to be given to the spouses back home.

A circle of unity candles was lit to symbolize the wedding rings that each soldier had on his or her finger, according to Stuart. Soldiers came from their seats to light one each until the entire circle was complete, burning like the love in their hearts.

"Days from now, your loved ones will be presented with these certificates and a matching coin," said Maj. Steve Leonard, executive officer, 526th FSB. "Today, you have done much more than reaffirm your love for someone. You have written a song of love that will remind someone that you share a common destiny, a unique and special commitment, a love as true and enduring as time itself."

Sgt. Walter Nery-Guity, Headquarters and Company A, 526th FSB, believes the program is a



1st Lt. Marcia Lohnes, Company C, 526th Forward Support Battalion and Pfc. Timothy Henson, Headquarters and Co. A, 526th FSB, light unity candles at a Coin and Covenant ceremony at Camp Performance to symbolize their faithfulness to their spouses. The program was developed by Army chaplains to strengthen the marriages of soldiers deployed away from home.

good way to strengthen marriages. "It feels good because a lot of spouses believe that since we're in a hostile place that we don't think about them," he said. "It lets us say 'yes, we are at war and yes, we still think about you.'"

The program will continue to be offered and will hopefully spread to other units so all soldiers can participate, Stuart added.

"In the end, when all we have done here is fin-

ished, we will return to our loved ones," Leonard said. "After the reunions, after the tears, what they will remember, more than anything is that we gave everything we had to share our love with them. In the midst of a combat zone, far from the safety of your homes and families, you had the courage and commitment to stand before God and reaffirm your love for those precious few who await your safe return."

Happy Thanksgiving!



From the Scimitar staff

Weekly Words of Wisdom

“ *Cowards falter, but danger is often overcome by those who nobly dare.* ”

—*Queen Elizabeth I*

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"We've got some great students here and they are very diligent about their work. That's why they show up here after working all day long."

The course is open to all soldiers. Ali said on some evenings, privates study next to lieutenant colonels.

According to Shabazz, the course teaches its students greetings, the alphabet and common expressions.

Shabazz said his teaching style emphasizes transliteration – using English characters to describe Arabic sounds. He wants his students to use all their senses in the learning process. Everybody has different learning styles and Shabazz attempts to incorporate all styles into his class.

"My students will write Arabic, see Arabic, speak Arabic and hear Arabic and hopefully, remember Arabic," said Shabazz. "It's a very old language with many sounds unique to itself."

Shabazz said he learned Arabic by listening to tapes, reading books and asking his tutors a lot of questions in his hometown, Philadelphia. He thought learning all the characters and their four forms was challenging. Many students get confused because in the English language, adjectives precede nouns, whereas in Arabic the opposite is true.

The course meets three times per week. Usually, one lesson is studied per week, but sometimes the students learn quickly and two lessons are covered, said Shabazz. He said he'll teach the course until he redeploy.

When asked how he likes teaching Arabic in a Middle Eastern country, Shabazz responded, "I think this experience will be memorable. It's more meaningful than teaching back home in Philadelphia."

Delicate donations



Photo by Spc. Joshua M. Risner/40th Public Affairs Detachment

Capt. Scott Todd, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and Dr. B. Y. Mohammed look through some of the items donated by people across the United States to the pediatric ward of the Razzee General Hospital. The items were delivered by soldiers from the 502nd on Nov. 16. Boxes containing everything from baby formula to stuffed animals have started pouring in with many more to come, according to Todd.

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"They still run the 398 hours," said Staff Sgt. Dominic Barnello, sniper course cadre member. "It's not condensed, it's squished together. They get it all at once. It's a little harder on them because it's a lot of information flushed into their brains at once."

The sniper school was set up in the Sinjar region of northwest Iraq because of its vast prairies. The openness of the landscape lends itself well to the long firing ranges that had to be built to accommodate the weapons training in the course, said Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy, command sergeant major, 2nd Battalion, 187th

Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

The 101st soldiers appreciate being taught the techniques and skills that can be applied to their current situation in Iraq.

"(The cadre) brought to the table a lot of great skill. They've been a great asset," Malloy said.

"These guys out here are real motivated to do this."

It's not just deployed soldiers who are enjoying the learning opportunities, cadre members are glad to be teaching soldiers taking part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"As soon as I found out that we were coming I was ecstatic. What's better than to bring the training to

them?" Barnello said.

The students relish the chance to learn combat skills that will make them a bigger asset to their units.

"It's a good opportunity to perfect marksmanship skills and learn all the techniques," said Spc. Bryce Baker, scout, 2nd Bn., 187th Inf. Rgt. "It's a lot of information thrown at us real quick, but they're good teachers and we're here to learn."

Like the 19 other students, Baker plans on taking his newly acquired skills back to his unit where he'll be able to pass his knowledge on to others and make the unit stronger.

The sniper course is divided into two portions. In the first part, the students undergo marksmanship train-

ing. Using their M-24 Sniper Weapon Systems, they learn how to hit targets at distances ranging from 100 meters to 800 meters.

The budding snipers learn to hit stationary and moving targets during the day and night. They also learn how to judge and adjust for unknown distances.

During the second phase they learn sniper fieldcraft. This includes range estimation, creating camouflaged and concealed clothes and environments, and detecting unnatural movements or objects.

They also learn stalking, where they have to move within a certain distance of a target and fire without being detected.



How are you spending the holiday season in Iraq?

Your holiday wish lists, pictures and Dear Santa letters are welcome for publication in the holiday editions of the Scimitar throughout the holiday season.

Submissions can be e-mailed to